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Making The Grade #28: The Everyman Issue

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I'll confess that in my most recent e-newsletters I offered some pretty expensive coins, and there were fewer of the less expensive variety on offer. As a result, I endured some hurtful comments from otherwise kind, long time customers like:

"Hey, there goes Mr. Fancy Pants!"

and

"You maht jes' be gittin' too big fer yer britches, Mistuh!"

... and other trouser-related insults.

Wait -- that's not exactly true. No one said any of those specific things to me. And no one I know speaks like a character from the movie, *Deliverance*. But a few collectors did tell me they would like to see a few more affordable coins to choose from in my future lists.

So while I still will offer some expensive coins too (hey – I gotta eat at least 3 meals a day, and some people do buy expensive coins from me) I will make a great effort from now to offer lots of choices in the sub-\$1000 area. And as always, I endeavor to offer only those coins that you simply cannot find elsewhere.

Ideas for Inexpensive But Challenging Coin Collections

I noticed that most coin dealers over the years would promote coins and collecting areas that they (coincidentally) happen to have in stock. I am not like most other coin dealers. For one thing – most coin dealers are more successful than I am.

No – instead I am going to give you, gentle reader, ideas for collecting coins, most of which I do not carry in inventory. I don't do this on purpose; I like to pay my bills as much as the next guy. But this was the list I came up with just now, off the top of my head. Use these ideas as a jumping off point to come up with your own ideas. It is a great and flexible hobby, and not one that should be restricted to what other people tell you to collect, or to what people have done in the past.

Dave's 10 inexpensive collections to put together that you may not have thought of before

1. A set of choice uncirculated Eisenhower dollars (finding nice ones is tougher than you think, believe it or not),
2. A set of clad business strike Washington quarters (same comment. The mints took no care in making these),
3. A collection of 150 different varieties of Connecticut coppers (you can probably find 150 different for less than \$200 each),
4. A 50 piece set of classic commemorative half dollars. The spreads between grades are so small that you can crack them out of their slabs and put them in capital plastic holders if you wish. Or, you can collect them with their original packaging and ephemera that they came with – if you can find it. Much of that ephemera is harder to find than the coins themselves.
5. A set of gold classic Commemoratives. A completable set (if you ignore the two \$50 gold coins, as most people do), and they are getting no love at the present moment.
6. A date set of US half cents from 1800 to 1857.
7. A denomination set of Mexican/South American Reales from ½ real to 8 Reales. You can do both the pillar style and the portrait style coinage. Most likely these were the coins you would spend if you lived in America in the 1700's and early 1800's.
8. A set of nice uncirculated Franklin half dollars, not paying attention to full bell lines. Brilliant or attractively toned – or both.
9. A set of Standing Liberty Quarter's in uncirculated, not paying attention to full heads. You can get mostly full heads on most of the dates for little or no premium, and these are great looking coins.
10. A collection of contemporary counterfeit 2 reales. This recommendation is a bit self-serving, but is a great way to get a sense of history and to collect items that are extremely rare, though not very expensive. Rarity 7 (4 to 12 specimens known in all grades) is a typical rarity rating for coins in this series, and unique coins often cost below \$1000. The most expensive 2 reales counterfeit ever sold at auction was less than \$2000. Perhaps not coincidentally, that very coin is being offered in this issue (see below). There is a US connection to these coins even though they seem to be "foreign" at first glance, as many were made in America to circulate in the American colonies and in the newly formed United States in the early 1800's.

Now On to the NewP's

As in my previous newsletters, these coins are the items I have gathered over the last few weeks. The plan is to upload all these coins to my website. In the meantime, readers of this newsletter will be the very first to lay eyes on these offerings. By popular demand, I've included photos of the coins where I have them.

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The "Making the Grade" Featured Coin

1805 Draped Bust Facing Right Half Eagle. NGC graded AU58.

A beautiful example of this classic early American coin. Rich luster rings the obverse and completely covers the reverse; the reverse is fully mint state. Choice early gold is enormously popular in any market. \$13,500.

New Listings

1783 Washington & Independence Copper. PCGS graded Proof 65 Brown.

Engrailed Edge. Baker-3, considered to be rarity-5. Well mirrored surfaces and an impeccable strike. The eye appeal of this coin is outstanding. \$1195.

1787 Fugio Copper. Cross After Date. PCGS graded VF35.

Newman 1-B, considered to be Rarity-4. This was the original obverse die for Fugio coppers, as it was paired with the famous "American Congress" pattern reverse. Mostly milk chocolate brown in color, with areas of darker variegation. A distinct Redbook type coin, and quite difficult to find in the upper grades such as this. \$3,250.

1787 Fugio Copper. PCGS graded F15.

"States United" Redbook type. Newman 12-KK, considered to be Rarity 6. One of the really tough Fugio die varieties. \$2350.

1787 Fugio Copper. PCGS graded VF35.

"States United" Redbook type. Newman 15-V, considered to be Rarity-5. A high grade, late die state example of this difficult die variety. \$2650.

1787 Fugio Copper. PCGS graded VF35.

"United States" Redbook type. Newman 16-H, considered to be Rarity-5. This is an incredible coin. It is choice by any standard. Most likely in the high condition census when color and surface quality are taken into account. \$4500.

1802 Bust Dime. NGC graded VG-8.

A every tough key date in the series. A good looking coin with light gray toning and lots of detail for the grade. PCGS #4472. \$3600.

1852 Half Cent. PCGS graded Proof 65 Brown CAC.

Restrike. A proof-only date, offered here in gem proof. Estimates range as high as 100 survivors for this issue; that seems a tad high based on my experience. Regardless, a gorgeous example of this popular and very rare date. \$7950.

1855 Half Cent. PCGS graded Proof-62 Brown.

An attractive light gold with light tinges of green and a hint of blue, with nicely mirrored fields. Why isn't this graded Red & Brown – I don't know, but it is a very nice example. \$3975.

1886 Morgan Dollar. PCGS graded MS63 CAC. Ex. Simpson

Pedigreed to the legendary Bob Simpson Collection of rainbow toned Morgans. \$1150.

1896 Morgan Dollar. NGC graded MS65+.

A rainbow toned beauty. \$1475.

1904 Barber Half Dollar. NGC graded Proof-68.

As my Irish In-Laws often say : "Sweet William!" An amazing, virtually perfect coin with beautiful green and blue coloration. This coin could really benefit from being reholdered, since it is housed in a 20 year old slab and that slab has a few surface scuffs. No time to do so prior to press time, however. \$13,750.

1904 \$20 Liberty Gold. PCGS graded MS65+ CAC.

To every thing there is a season. And the season for top end gold may be coming around again, thanks to our British friends and to their surprise vote to exit the European Union. No promises of course, but if ever there was a time to consider CAC'd, slabbed high grade gold, this may be such a time. \$5600.

1925 Norse Gold Medal. PCGS graded Proof 66 CAC.

PCGS has only graded two coins finer than this. Only 47 pieces (net of melting by the Philadelphia Mint) were made, and far fewer are known today. It is interesting to speculate that if the US Mint chose to make proof versions of gold coins in the 1920's they very likely would have done it in the matte proof finish, as shown here. \$39,500.

1934-S Peace Dollar. PCGS graded MS64.

Booming luster and blushes of gold on the key date silver dollar. \$7750.

Exonumia, World Coins, Flotsam & Jetsam**(1071-1078) Byzantine Empire Gold (Electrum) NGC graded Mint State.**

And now for something completely different. A Michael VII Ducas, AV or electrum histamenon trachy. Christ is on the obverse, and good ol' Michael VII is on the reverse. Difficult to find in full mint state. This coin features a convex obverse and a concave reverse, as made. NGC has graded the Strike as 4/5, and the Surfaces as 4/5. A cool piece of golden history. \$2450.

1562 Great Britain Three Pence. PCGS graded AU50.

Spink-2565. If you have some spare cash lying around, you may want to contribute to the Art Fund and Royal Museum's appeal to purchase the iconic masterpiece, "Armada Portrait of Elizabeth I". They are trying to raise \$14 million to buy it from its private owner. Or you could save a few bucks and just buy this coin. A gorgeous, finely detailed portrait of Queen Elizabeth I, with gray-blue toning, a great strike and perfectly centered. Unlike the painting, this coin comes with PCGS TrueView Images. \$975.

1785 Inimica Tyrannis Colonial Pattern. Electrotype. Very Fine. Uncertified.

Say you don't want to spend \$80k for a genuine example of this rare speculative pattern. This electro is only of moderate quality, but this issue is rarely seen in electrotype form. \$125.

"1787" (circa 1861) Robinson's Copy of the Brasher Doubloon. PCGS graded MS65.

Kenney-3, W-15100. This item was produced in 1861 by Alfred Robinson of Hartford, Connecticut using dies made by the Boston die sinker Joseph Merriam. According to Kenney, twenty-five examples were struck in copper and twenty-five in brass. This brass example is one of two graded by PCGS and the higher graded of the two. \$975.

(1790's) Conder Token Farthing. Middlesex-Pidcock's. NGC graded MS67 Red & Brown.

D&H-1067. Elephant obverse/parrot reverse. An even more incredible preservation on this Conder token. Undoubtedly among the finest known of this issue. Very reasonable for what this is. \$650.

(1790's) Conder Token Halfpenny. Middlesex-Pidcock's. D&H-414. NGC graded MS66 Brown.

Another popular Conder token design is the lion obverse and a Bird of prey on the reverse. Top condition and quite beautiful. \$600.

(1790's) Great Britain Conder Token Farthing. NGC graded MS66 Brown.

Middlesex-Pidcock's, D&H-1065. A very popular design, featuring an elephant on the obverse and a 2-headed steer on the reverse. Apparently such animals were frequently seen in England during this period, though usually late at night and after one stumbled out of a pub. Even medium brown surfaces and full luster, as you would expect from such a lofty grade. \$450.

(1790's) Great Britain Conder Token Halfpenny. NGC graded MS65 Red & Brown.

Middlesex-Hackney, D&H-312B. About 50% mint red remains on this advertising token for George Butler, Oil Man. The

obverse die is buckling, leading to a convex obverse. \$500.

1795 Conder token Halfpenny. Suffolk-Beccles D&H-16a. NGC graded MS65 Brown Proof-Like.

Mirrored fields attract the eye on this gem uncirculated Conder token. \$450.

1799 George Washington Westwood Medal. Electrotpe. Almost Uncirculated [uncertified].

Baker-80. An electrotpe of this popular and rare medal. 41 mm. Dies for this medal were engraved by John Westwood. The obverse legend reads: "George Washington, Esqr. Late President Late President of the United States of America"; Reverse: "With Courage / And Fidelity / He Defended The / Rights / Of A Free People / Died Decr. 14, 1799 / Aged / 68" and around: "Made Commander In Chief Of The American Forces The 15 June 1775." A great electrotpe copy of this rare, very historic, early Washington Death medal. \$195.

(Circa 1800) Undated Contemporary Imitation Blacksmith Style 2 Reales. Struck over an 1802 Large Cent. Nearly As Struck [uncertified].

This coin is considered the "King" of Contemporary Counterfeit 2 reales by many collectors of the series. It has a pedigree dating back to around 1900, when it was owned by S.S. Heal, a well known Canadian numismatist who joined the ANA in 1902 (his envelope is included). The obverse shows a crude portrait of Carlos III, while the reverse depicts the typical "Pillars of Hercules" found on the 2 reales of that era. This coin spans three collecting areas: US Large Cents, Blacksmith Tokens, and of course Counterfeit 2 Reales. It was first auctioned as part of the Estate of Mike Ringo (Stack's, June 2009) where I purchased it. Later it was sold by Stack's in 2012 when I sold my collection. Now it is back in my hands, at least for now. It is unique, with not even a hint of a second specimen rumored. This coin realized \$1,437 in the 11/2012 Stack's auction. Super-crude and super cool, with an obvious North American connection due to the large cent overstrike. \$1850.

1812 Contemporary Counterfeit 8 Reales. Very Fine [uncertified].

Unlisted in Robert Gurney's fun new book, "Counterfeit Portrait Eight Reales: The Un-Reales". Quite an arresting look to it too. An obverse die break makes it look as if King Ferdinand VII is smoking his bubble pipe (or perhaps blowing on a New Year's eve noisemaker – your choice). Neat-o, at least to these eyes. \$225.

1846 Wiener Medal. Notre Dame a Tongres, Belgium. Uncirculated.

50mm, bronze, Hoydonck 16. This Belgian church, situated in the oldest town in Belgium, was built from 1240 to 1541 (which makes the decades-long repair work on I-95 here in Connecticut seem lightning quick in comparison). This series of intricately engraved medals by the master sculptor Jacques Wiener has no equals, in my opinion. \$260.

1847 Liberia 2c Pattern. PCGS graded Specimen-64 Brown.

KM-Pn2. A spectacular looking coin. If viewing this coin doesn't knock your socks off, then... well ... then you were probably not wearing any socks to begin with. A large copper coin, just a little bit smaller than the diameter of a silver dollar. The fields are deeply mirrored and the design is unusual. Quite rare. \$975.

1863 Medal in Specially Inscribed Presentation Case, to the Engraver Charles Wiener. Uncirculated [uncertified].

Presented to Charles Wiener, on the occasion of the Reception of the Princess Alexandra, March 1863. Apparently this was the wedding of the Century, at least according to the book I found on the Internet that is devoted entirely to a description of this wedding. In detail. In minute detail, in fact. A beautiful medal presented to the youngest of the three Wiener brothers, all three of whom (Jacques, Leopold and Charles) were skilled medal engravers. \$375.

1896 Chain Pier Silver Medal. Uncirculated [uncertified].

I bought this medal for the beautiful toning. The way the golden orange toning lays on the obverse, it looked to me like a calming sunset with the pier in the foreground. I showed it to someone else though, and he thought it looked like London was burning in the distance. As a lifelong fan of the punk band, The Clash, I will accept that interpretation as well. \$245.

1925 Norse Medal. Silver. Enameled. Uncirculated [uncertified].

This was carefully and expertly made on a thick planchet silver medal. The first I have ever seen on a Norse medal. \$225.

1975 Mexico City Mint – National Banking 50th Anniversary Silver Medal. NGC graded MS63.

While I am all for celebrating the anniversaries of National banks, the reason I bought this medal was for it's spectacular toning. About the size of a US silver dollar, it is just a super cool work of art. \$195.

(1979) Mexico City Mint Medal – Banco de Mexico 50th Anniversary. NGC graded MS65.

From the same collection as the previous mint medal. And while it is not as spectacularly toned as the previous medal, it is quite attractive in its own right. \$95.

2006-P North Dakota Washington Quarter Error. PCGS graded MS65.

A dramatic error with a missing clad layer, giving the buffalo side the appearance of a gem full red coin, while the "Washington Head" side appears completely normal. \$600.

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